



## Rethinking Thanksgiving, 2010

Suggestions for how an honest and inclusive history of Thanksgiving may be included in Montana schools (From *Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years*. Bill Bigelow, Bob Peterson, Ed. Pages 36, 75, 83-84):

- Brainstorm with your class how they could teach others in your school about how Montana Indians may or may not celebrate Thanksgiving Day.
- Have students research harvest festivals, considering: Where does our food come from? How are we similar to our neighbors?
- Look at local advertisements or school textbooks for Thanksgiving and search for stereotypes of American Indians. Are native people shown without the cultural, religious, and language differences among tribes (Stereotype Checklist, page 36)? Older students can research and discuss these questions: In whose interest is the textbook version of events? Why did Pilgrims and natives gather together in 1621? Why were they involved in warfare later on in King Philip's War? What was the outcome of the plague on Indian populations? How did native/white people engage during this time period? Now? What were the conditions of Squanto's enslavement?
- Read (local or online) articles, stories, or poetry by native authors and activists. What are native people who live in your community or state saying?
- Using N. Scott Momaday's poem, *The Delight Song of Tsoai-Talee*, as a model, begin with "I'm ..." and complete the sentence (possibly, suggest 10 descriptions).
- Review Alphabet of the Americas (p. 75) and discuss how students' lives would be different without these contributions. Chart the items into categories. Note that many of the plants were not merely 'found', but developed by Native people; it is important in understanding the exchange of items between whites and native people.
- Please consider an alternative teaching endeavor, as opposed to planning a pageant or portrayal of the stereotypical Pilgrim and Indian story.